A

LETTER

FROM A

GENTLEMAN in the CITY

TO A

GENTLEMAN in the COUNTRY,

ABOUT THE

Odiouſneſs of Perſecution,

Occaſioned by the late Rigorous Proceedings against Sober Diſſenters, by certain Angry Juſtices in the

COUNTRY

It is the part of the Chriſtian-*Religion to Suffer, and not to make People Suffer for Religion,* Tertul. Apol.

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SIR,

THE News of a Perſecution meerly for a matter of Religion, at this time a day, when the whole Nation appears profeſſedly to diſlike it; and the giving countenance to Informers (who are the Peſt of every Nation, and the common Enemies of Property) to the Prejudice of peaceable People, and thoſe owned to be *Proteſtants*, and known to have had no hand in the late National Quarrels, makes your Friends, who have had notice of your late Troubles, ſuſpect that there is ſomething in your caſe more then ordinary.

Had this fallen out in ſome remote Country, where no Informer had ever yet appeared, we might have conceived, that through Ignorance that ſort of Devil [illegible] might have been miſtaken for an Angel of Light; and that upon his bare averment, ſome well-meaning Perſons, even againſt their own Experience, might have been induced to miſtake their peaceable Neighbours for Dangerous Incendiaries, and unworthy to enjoy their own proper Goods. Or had this happened in a place more near, where the Name of an Informer had been heard, and his Malignity underſtood in the general; but where, through want of converſing with *Weſtminſterhall* and *Guildhall*, they might have taken the Fiend to have had more power, and more skill in fencing then in truth he hath; it would not have been eſteemed a very ſtrange thing, that a Magiſtrate ſhould have been found out, who taking it to be an impoſſible thing to ſecure himſelf againſt the Devil without ſome ſacrifice, ſhould rather chooſe to make an Offering to him of his Neighbours Goods, then to run the hazard of loſing his own. But to hear of a Perſecution for Religion in a Country which lies ſo near *France*, where *Proteſtants* are allowed their publick Temples, under a Government zealouſly *Popiſh*: To ſee an Informer, the Spie and Scout againſt property, encouraged in the great Country of property, and that for peaceable

Conſcience; and in a Country of ſo much good Nature and Hoſpitallity. But to ſee that ſort of Creature concerned in a County ſo neer *London* and *Weſtminſter*, as not to be capable of not knowing what Informers are, how deteſtable their Trade, how inconſiderable their Power, how generally indigent and diſſolute, how mean their Skill, how little they know more then to ſubborn Witneſſes to commit Perjuries, which are diſcovered to their Confuſion, is that which raiſeth Wonder in ſome of your Friends to ſo great an height, that they generally requeſt from your own hand the true ſtate of your Caſe in all its Circumſtances, to the end they may know, whether there be any thing which can differ it from the common Caſes of Perſecution meerly for Religion; from which the generality of the Country Gentlemen of *England* (and particularly thoſe of the Country where you live) do commonly profeſs to have a great an abhorrency, as they have from Depopulating of Countries, which is the Effect that ſuch Perſecutions muſt of neceſſity produce. In the mean time, do not (I pray take me to be one, who think it ſtrange to hear of Troubles; what hath been formerly may happen again without Aſtoniſhment; & you are too well known to be thought to be ſurprized or afraid.

Well did that Perſon conſider the Creature *Man*, who diſtinguiſhed him into two parts, viz. *the Man*, and *the Beaſt*: But it were happy for Mankind, if the *Beaſt* were leſs imperious and cruel: In truth it is hard to find where *the Man* is allowed to have any power in Acting; every thing ſeems ſo totally and abſolutely to be governed by *the Beaſt*, and by the Tyranny of its inordinate Paſſions and Senſes.

Where ſhall one find yet a ſingle Perſon in the World, who calls himſelf a *Chriſtian*, or that Party of Men who deſire to be eſteemed *Chriſtians*, but he and they will readily grant that Principle, Mat. 7. 12. *All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do you even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets*: and that other Principle, Rom. 3. 8. *Let us not do Evil that Good may come*, to be Goſpel-Principles, and oblieging to all Mankind.

There is not a Polition or States-Man, nor a Government any where, that owns *Chriſtianity* to be the true Religion, but confeſſeth

ſeſſeth, That in the Council of the *Jews*, which was aſſembled in order to the Perſecuting of the Apoſtles for Matters of meer Religion, *Gamaliel* adviſed prudently, and according to the Principles of true Religion, *Acts* 5 *Let them alone, for if this counſel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, we cannot overthrow it, leaſt happily we be found even to fight againſt God*: They will all confeſs readily, when preſſed with theſe charitable and peaceable Principles; that the Spirit of perſecuting for meer Religion, is a Spirit of Injuſtice, as not doing to others as our ſelves would be done unto; and a Spirit of diffiance and incredulity, refuſing to truſt God, and his providence, with the defence and juſtification of what is profeſſed to be of God: and yet it is hard to find that ſingle Perſon, and much more to Name, that Community or Government amongſt *Chriſtians*, now in being, whoſe practiſe, when they have opertunity, and power, are not contrary to their Principles: And not only ſo, but they will take upon them to juſtifie ſuch practiſes to be conſiſtant with, nay, even duties unto which they are obliged by that pure Religion which they take upon them to profeſs to the whole World.

But to the end I may not be eſteemed preſumptuous, or uncharitable in what I here aſſert, and in regard it is impoſſible to produce evident proofs for what I ſay, as touching ſingle perſons, let us a little examine the matter, as to Parties and Governments, taking this for granted, that every particular party calls it ſelf a true Church, or the true Church of Chriſt: If what is here urged of differing Churches ſhall be proved true, the preſumption will ſtand very ſtrong as to ſingle perſons; there being no ſingle perſon, who would be eſteemed a *Chriſtian*, but he is in communion or fellowſhip with ſome Church, which he owns to be the true Church of Chriſt, and by whoſe Judgment he is willing to be concluded, as being a profeſſed Member of it, and as taking it for his Principle; that every Member of the true Church of Chriſt ought to be of her Judgment, becauſe the Scripture ſayes, *She is the Pillar and Ground of Truth*; and though ſome boggle at this, yet nothing is truer then that every *Chriſtian* Society daily practiſeth it.

Now, the better to prepare the way for this intended Tryal, we will crave the Liberty firſt, to conſider *Chriſtianity* in the World

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in general, in its first Ages, when it was under Persecution for meer matter of Religion, and before it gained any civil Power and Dominion, from them we shall know what the true *Christianity* did teach; we will then consider *Christianity* in *England*, when divided only into two distinct Parties, *viz.* The *Protestants* and the *Papists*; and in the last place, we will consider *Christianity* in *England*, when the *Protestants* were subdivided into several Parties, *viz.* The *Episcopal*, or Church of *England Protestants*, the *Presbyterians*, the *Independents*, the *Anabaptists* and the *Quakers*: and when the *Papists* were become so small, that they were upon the matter inconsiderable, and I suppose from these differing times, we may hope for a reasonable Information.

First, Then suppose the question put to the *Christians* of the first and Primitive Times, under those first and greatest Persecutions, under which Christianity then suffered. *Is it lawful to persecute, and to make and execute Laws for the Inflicting of Pains and Penalties upon quiet and peaceable People for matters, meerly of Religion*; and in particular, *for meeting together meerly for matter of Religion?* Doubtless, their answer would have been given with one general Voice: *That it was not lawful*; and that it was against the rule of Christ, and the Law of Nature, *Quod Tibi non vis Alteri ne feceris, Do not unto another, what thou wouldst not have done unto thy self.* And that True it is, the *Jews*, who persecuted the Lord of Life, and put him to Death for matter of meer Religion, did alledge for their Justification, that *they had a Law*, and that *by their Law he ought to die*: But that, that Law, and all Laws of that Nature, were against the Law of God; and that the *Christians* had *no such custom, nor the Churches of Christ*, is, I think, a most undenyable thing.

These Ages (by the agreement of all) were esteemed the purest Ages of Christianity; Religion being then most pure, when the Professors of it were most poor. And if any one shall conceive, that the *Christians* of those Ages, would have given any other answer, contrary to what I have here framed for them, and shall give a convincing Reason for such his apprehension, I shall confess my mistake. In the mean time I must say, that I cannot see what other answer they could have given, but

but what must have justified the Persecutions against themselves to have been innocent, on the part of the Persecutors, who believed those first *Christians* to Err in Religion, and to be disturbers of the Peace, and Government of their Countries; and their Meetings to be unlawful Assemblies: And much more Innocent on the part of the inferiour Magistrates, who took care to put those Laws in Execution; they being as much obliged in all civil Respects, to put in Execution the Laws of their Superiours, as our Inferiour Magistrates are obliged to the Execution of our Laws; and they gave the same Reasons: And the same is to be said in the Case of the Persecution of our Lord Christ, as seems very clear from that Prayer, which he offered for his Persecutors: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*; here then is a Principle of Christianity undivided.

In the next place, we are to consider Christianity in *England*, when divided only into two distinct Parties, *viz. Protestants* and *Papists*, and when the *Protestants* had made no Subdivision amongst themselves here. This I take to be in the times of K. *Hen.* 8. K. *Edw.* 6. Q. *Mary*, and part of the Reign of Q. *Elizabeth*, for though there were diversities of Opinions amongst *Protestants*, as well here as in other Countries, even in their first beginnings; yet they were not divided into parties, being every where upon the Defensive. In the time of K. *Hen.* 8. which I intend to instance in, both parties were Persecuted.

The Case stands thus, that King at his coming to the Crown, found the whole Nation in a quiet possession of Popery, & holding it as an Article of their Faith, and the Principle whereon they believed the unity of their Faith depended, that *The Pope was the Supream Pastor and visible Head of Government next under Christ, of that which they then called the Catholick Church of Christ, of which the then National Church of* England *was a Member*: The King had defended this Article by Writing so vigorously, that the Pope had for that very work conferred upon him the Title of *Defender of the Faith*, to be enjoyed and used by him, and his Successors forever. The Parliament of *England* after this threw off this Supream Pastour, this visible Head, and put this King into his place; so far as concerned the Church of *England*, by the

the Title of *Supream Head of the Church of England*, annexed to the Crown; and this by a Law, 26 *Hen.* 8. C. 1. And then by another Law, 26 *Hen.* 8. C. 13. It was Enacted, *That if any by Word or Writing, should attempt to deprive the King of the Title of his Royal Estate, he should be adjudged a Traytor*: This change of the Headship of the Church, was, and is truly (at least in *England*) a *Protestant* Doctrine; and undoubtedly there is no *Protestant* whatsoever, but approves the casting off the Popes Headship, as conformable with the Doctrine of *Protestants*. And upon the latter of these two Laws, divers suffered death for their denying the Kings Supremacy; this was the first step made in *England*, from Popery towards Protestancy. And the Vigorous Execution of this latter Law, encouraged several *Protestants* from forraign parts to come into *England*, not doubting but to have a Liberty to exercise their Religion here; and it gave confidence to many of the Subjects of *England* to receive, and to others, to entertain good thoughts of *Protestancy*; being perswaded, that after the sheding of so much Blood, as had been shed here upon that Occasion, *England* would never any more admit of the Article of the Popes Supremacy; and Consequently, would every day make greater steps from that Church, of which the Pope was owned to be the Supream Pastour. And certain it is, that *Protestancy* upon this Occasion also made its entrance into *England*, and gained Ground here, and such (if not by open application to the King for that purpose yet) at least in their Hearts desired a Toleration, and to be admitted to Preach, and Exercise their Religion here, without being Persecuted for their so doing; so that their Principle was at that time (at least) against Persecution for meer Religion. But *Protestancy* being now taken notice of to grow, another Law was made, 31 *Hen.* 8. for setling unity of Opinion in the six Articles therein named, by which the denyal of Tansubstantiation, and several other Doctrines therein named, are Enacted to be punished with Death.

And now Persecution in *England*, for matters of meer Religion grew sharp and high; so that it is observed by our Historians, that upon one & the same day, some who were professed *Papists*, were put to death for denying the Kings Supremacy, which

which was a *Proteſtant* Article; and ſome who were profeſſed *Proteſtants*, were put to death for denying Tranſubſtantiation, which was an Article of the *Papiſts*; ſo that at this time, the Government could neither be ſaid to be *Popiſh* nor *Proteſtant*, but both parties were perſecuted moſt ſeverely for matters of meer Religion: and he who ſhould then have ſaid to either party, in juſtification of the Proceedings of the Magiſtrate in the Execution of either of thoſe Laws, that that party did not then ſuffer for any matter of meer Religion, but for breaking of the Peace, in breaking of the Kings Laws, would certainly have been taken not to have underſtood thoſe Laws, or the cauſe of their then Suffering. And now, ſuppoſe each of theſe parties ſeperately interrogated, when thus under Perſecution (for *Affliction dat Intellectum*) Is it lawful to Perſecute, and to make and Execute Laws, for the Inflicting of Pains & Penalties upon quiet & peaceable People, for matters of *meer Religion*? moſt certainly each party in their then preſent Circumſtances, would have anſwered in the Negative, that it was not lawful: They would not have fallen into the debate to conſider what Religion their Perſecutors were of, whether of the *Popiſh* or *Proteſtant*, to the end, to have fixt the Cruelty and Injuſtice of perſecuting for a matter of meer Religion, upon that party, as a Principle of that Religion, which their Fancies ſhould have perſwaded them to have been the Religion of their Perſecutors; the *Papiſts* would not have then ſtood formalizing that, becauſe the firſt Perſecution was occaſioned upon the denyal of the Kings Headſhip over the Church of *England*, which was a *Proteſtant* Doctrine, in oppoſition to the Popes Headſhip, which was the *Popiſh* Doctrine; therefore the *Proteſtants* were the Agreſſors in the Perſecution; and therefore the Principle of Perſecution was a *Proteſtant* Principle; And therefore, the Perſecution of the *Proteſtants* afterwards was no other then a juſt Judgment of God drawn upon the *Proteſtants* by themſelves, as a Conſequence of that Principle of Perſecution, which gave them the firſt occaſion or oppertunity of introducing their Religion into *England*; nor would the *Proteſtants* by way of Recrimination have charged the *Papiſts* then, that becauſe that King and the then Government were of the *Popiſh* Religion in

every point, ſave only in the Article touching the Supremacy; therefore the Principle of Perſecution muſt neceſſarily be a *Popiſh* Principle: No, they would moſt certainly each party have diſclaimed the Principle, as unwarranted by the Principles of true *Chriſtianity*, which each of them claimed to be theirs, and each of them would have agreed, that it was their common Principle to do unto others as they deſired others ſhould do unto them; here we ſee the Principle of *Chriſtianity* in *England* when divided.

The Perſecutions before mentioned, being quieted by the Death of K. *Henry* the Eight, and the Crown deſcending unto K. *Edward* the Sixth, an Infant of ſuch tender Years, as made him uncapable of Exerciſing the Government in his own Perſon, not being come to the uſe of right Reaſon, the Duke of *Somerſet* took upon him the Adminiſtration of all things, under the Title of *Protector*, and with him the *Proteſtant* party had their ſole Intereſt. Several Penal Laws were made in this Kings Reign, for the Inflicting Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion, which gave occaſion to the *Papiſts* to charge upon *Proteſtants* the Principle of Perſecution for matters of meer Religion as their Principle: It is true, the *Papiſts* were at that time Sufferers, and were actually Perſecuted by the then Government for matters of meer Religion; but true Charity might eaſily have found other Reaſons, unto which thoſe Perſecutions might warrantably have been Aſigned, and there was certainly no neceſſity of Aſſigning them to any Principle of the *Proteſtants*; the firſt Law which was made, relating to theſe matters, was 1 *Edw.* 6. C. 1. touching the Lords Supper, Entituled, *The Penalties for ſpeaking againſt the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, or againſt the receiving thereof in both kinds:* This ſeems to have no other tendency then barely to keep both Parties from falling together by the Ears, and the *Proteſtants* were more likely to fall under the Puniſhment of this Law then the *Papiſts*: none could ſay that it was the effect of Intemperate Spirits; for though it directed Communion in both kinds, to ſuch as deſired to communicate; yet it compelled not any perſon to communicate: And it had a Clauſe of great Temperance in the very cloſe of it

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in these words, *Not condemning hereby the usuage of any Church out of the Kings Majesties Dominions.* The next Law of this Nature, was made in the same Parliament, *viz.* 1 *Edward* 6. C. 12. It is Entituled thus, *viz. Statutes concerning Treasons, &c. repealed*; and this cannot be denyed to be sharp against the *Papists*. It makes it highly Penal to affirm, *That the King is not, or ought not to be Supream Head on Earth of the Church of* England *and* Ireland, *or any of them immediately under God*; *or that the Bishop of* Rome, *or any other Person or Persons, other then the King of* England *for the time being, is, or ought to be by the Laws of God Supream Head of the same Churches, or any of them*: But there is no necessity or reason of ascribing this to any *Protestant* Principle, though it is supposed to be made in affirmance of a *Protestant* Principle. Another penal Law was made 2 and 3 *Edw.* 6. Entituled, *The Penalty for not using Uniformity of Service and Administration of Sacraments.* And in 3 and 4 *Edw.* 6. C. 10. was made an Act, *For the abolishing and putting away of divers Books and Images*: Both which were severe against the *Papists* in matters of meer Religion; yet do I not find any necessity why the Persecutions, which these Statutes occasioned, should be imputed to any *Protestant* Principle. During the whole Reign of this Infant King, it is clear, that the *Papists* suffered Persecution from the Hands of the *Protestants* for matters of meer Religion; and without doubt, had it been then demanded of the *Papists*, whether such Persecutions and such Laws Enacting such Persecutions were lawful, and agreeable with the Principles of true *Christianity*, which they pretended to maintain; their Answer would have been in the Negative: And they would then with one accord have readily agreed, that Persecution for matters of meer Religion, was no more consistant with the Rule of Christ, requiring us, *To do unto others, as we would that others should do unto us*, then Murder and Robbery.

But the Persecutions Inflicted upon the *Papists*, by the Law made in the time of King *Edward* the Sixth, did not last long, they ended with his Life; and by the descending of the Crown to Queen *Mary*, the *Papists* were rescued from all their Sufferings. All the Laws made against them in the times of *Hen.* 8. and *Edw.* the 6. were Repealed; but the case was altered with the poor

Proteſtants, whoſe Sufferings were ſo great, and are ſo ſharply & juſtly reflected on, even to this day, that I, who love not to aggravate any thing, eſpecially that carries its own aggravation with it, will ſay no more of them, but beg of our good God to blot them out of our remembrance. Sure I am, had any *Proteſtant* been asked his Judgment in that Age, touching the Principle of Perſecuting for matters of meer Religion, he would have diſclaimed it, as abſolutely contrary to the Principles of his Religion, which is the point that I am labouring to Evince. And after all this, ſhall any one take it ill, if upon a Principle of Charity I ſhall profeſs, that I could never as yet ſee any thing offered, which in my poor apprehenſion did neceſſarily Evince; *That Perſecution for meer Religion, was even an avowed Principle of either ſide.*

The bloody Fury of Perſecution, under which the *Proteſtants* ſuffered ſo miſerably in Q. *Maries* time, did end with her Reign, which was but ſhort; and after that, the *Proteſtants* never ſuffered more from the *Papiſts*. But upon the death of Q. *Mary*, the Crown coming to Q. *Elizabeth*; and ſhe thereupon declaring her ſelf a firm, a zealous, and to all intents, religiouſly a *Proteſtant*, the edge came ſtrong againſt the *Papiſts*, before any differences were diſcerned to be among the *Proteſtants*. Several of the Popiſh Clergy ſuffered Perſecution ſome even unto Death in ſeveral parts of the Kingdom: And new Laws were from time to time, framed and multiplyed for thoſe purpoſes. And if now we ask the Opinion of the *Papiſts* as to Penal Laws, either Sanguinary or others, and Perſecutions for meer matter of Religion; they will tell you (and they continue in that proteſtation even unto this day) *That all ſuch Laws and Perſecutions are unlawful, and againſt the Principles of the Goſpel*: And though the *Proteſtants* under ſeveral changes, have been in the poſſeſſion of thoſe Laws, and have at times more or leſs Executed them; yet (ſo far as I can find) they do not own Perſecution for matters meerly of Religion to be their Principle, or lawful.

After the *Papiſts* had ſome time continued the alone Perſecuted Party for Matters meerly of Religion, ſeveral Differences, in Matters meerly of Religion, happened to divide the *Proteſtants* into

into diſtinct and ſeparate Parties during ſome part of the Reign of *Queen Elizabeth*, and alſo during the ſeveral and ſucceſſive Reigns of *King James* and *King Charles* the firſt; and about the beginning of the Reign of *King James*, ſome particular deſperate Malecontents, profeſſedly of the Popiſh Religion, being found guilty of a moſt helliſh Plot, whereby they had deſigned the Deſtruction both of that King and of his Parliament by Gun-powder (for which they were deſervedly Executed) ſeveral new and more ſevere Laws were then, and at ſeveral times after, made againſt the *Papiſts* in general, by which ſeveral Puniſhments were inflicted on them for Matters of meer Religion; and ſeveral penal Laws were alſo made, by which the then Governing *Proteſtant* Party, then, and ſtill diſtinguiſhed by the Name of the *Church of England*, or the *Epiſcopal Party* perſecuted them.

The Diſſenting *Proteſtants* of all ſorts were proſecuted under the general Name of *Non-conformiſts*, who cryed aloud to have a Toleration granted, that is, to themſelves; & declared it abſolutely Unlawful to puniſh any for Matters of meer Religion; and when this (by them ſo much deſired Toleration) could not be obtained otherwiſe, they took up Arms, and we all know what followed.

During the continuance of this before-mentioned War, and after *King Charles* the firſt was not able to make head againſt the *Non-conformiſts*, the *Non-conformiſts* retaliated the Church of *England*, and not a little cruſht the Popiſh Party, both having engaged on t'other ſide, and being of other Religions, eſteemed themſelves perſecuted for matter of Religion.

That War being ended with the Death of *King Charles* the firſt, and the expelling of our preſent King out of his Dominions, and the total Ruin of *Epiſcopacy*, and the Supreſſion of the *Papiſts*, and the total change of the Government, the *Non-conformiſts* under the ſeveral Forms took upon them and kept the Government, until our preſent King was by the Divine Hand of Providence reſtored to his Crown; during all which time the *Epiſcopal* Party and the *Papiſts* ſuffered, more or leſs, for matters (at leaſt in their apprehenſion) meerly of Religion. But theſe two Parties were not alone in their ſufferings, for during thoſe bloody conteſts there appeared another party which from

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its very first appearing in this Kingdom hath been severely Persecuted, and that only for matters of Religion, this party was the people called Quakers; they did at their first shewing themselves in the World, go under the name of the *Children of Light*, because they assert as their main and first Principle, that every man and woman is inlightned with a saving Light from God, which all ought to obey on pain of Damnation; but by one *Bennit* a Justice, in 1650. were nick-named *Quakers*, they professed themselves to adhere to the plain Principles of the first *Christians*, and particularly to hold it as their Principle, *that all Persecution whatsoever, against any Party, People, or Person whatsoever, for matters meerly of Religion is absolutely Unlawfull, Unrighteous, and against the Spirit and Will of God, and destructive of the true Christianity*; and to give them their due, they have been true Contenders for their Principle, both by their frequent Apologies and Remonstrances on the one hand, and invincible patience in Suffering on the other hand.

Upon the Restauration of our present King, the *Episcopal* party was also restored. The *Presbyterians*, *Independents* and *Anabaptists* expected a general toleration in matters of Religion according to some of the Kings gracious Letters, as a Reward for their not opposing the Restauration of the King: The Papists also expected the same thing, as a reward for their Loyalty in adhering to the Crown; the *Quakers*, now a great People, grew confident of the like freedom, because of their Innosensiveness to Government. But instead of this expected liberty; all the former Penal Laws made in the respective times of Q. *Elizabeth*. K. *James*. and K. *Charles* the first were revived and ordered to be put in Execution as well against all *Non-conformists*, who were *Protestants*, as against the *Papists*. And new and more severe Laws were made against them all: And by these respective practices we see what all these parties have done when they had Power.

I think such as understand the Transactions of our Country will clear me from having made any mistake as to matters of fact, in any thing that I have here said, touching past Persecutions, though I believe there will not want some who will either think me mis-

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taken in the point of Charity, when I profess to believe that I do not think there is any one party now in *England* who holds it as a Principle of their Religion, *that it is Lawfull to persecute*, or to make or Execute Laws for the inflicting of Paines or Penalties for any matters of meer Religion, or else they will suspect I do not in Truth believe what I here profess to believe in this point, since even by my own shewing in the several matters of fact before Urged by my self, it plainly appears, that there is not one party now in *England* (the People called *Quakers* only excepted) who professs themselves *Christians*; but have been notoriously guilty (more or less) of the very Fact, or (at least) of a publick allowing, if not abetting of it: And every party will be apt to censure me of Singularity (at least) since each party thinks that they have Arguments drawn from Facts, sufficient to fix this ugly Doctrine as a Principle upon that Religion which they hate most. O that *the Man* could prevail against *the Beast*! and that we would permit our Passions to give way to our Reason, to consider things nakedly, and as they truly are, *Si Satis est accusasse Quis erit Innocens*? If to accuse be a sufficient Conviction, what party shall be able to clear it self, and who knows not that 'tis a *Christians* part to suffer, but never to Persecute.

I very well know, that the *Protestants* in general, who look upon the *Papists* as their common Enemies, do in their Pulpits, in their Writings, and in all their Addresses to the People, charge them with those Rivers of Blood which streamed in the times of Q. *Mary*, and with the bloody Intentions which those miscreants had in their Hearts, who were engaged in the hellish Powder-plot; that the first was done by authority, and chiefly by the *Popish* Bishops, that the other, though the Fact; but of private persons, were never condemned by authority; and silence is an implyed consent and approbation. Do we well consider what the *Papists* offer by way of extenuation in answer to these Charages? they justifie none of these Facts: But as to the first, they recommend to us to be considered, the Circumstances that Q. *Mary* was in when she came to the Crown, all the chief Heads of the *Protestant* party, had set up and Proclaimed the Lady *Jane*

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duly Queen, in opposition to Q. *Mary*, their lawful Soveraign; they had raised an Army against her; she was compelled to gain her Right by force; she was a Conquerer: And if we will believe them, she had not given any Articles which might have obliged her to pardon any who were guilty of this Usurpation, and Treason; she was told it was a Confederacy of the whole party of the *Protestants*, which gave her a ground to suspect, that the *Protestants* held it for a Principle, that it was lawful for them to take up Arms against, and depose their lawful Soveraign, if of a Religion contrary to them. She might by the Laws then in being (the same which we have to this day in force amongst us) have taken away the Live of all who were any wayes Guilty of endeavouring to depose her; she did not make any one new persecuting Law (which is considerable) by which any of those were taken off who were put to Death: But being put into fears by her Council, that without making great Examples of Justice in all parts of the Kindom, she would be in danger of having new Insurrections made by the *Protestants* against her, she was perswaded that the only way to prevent the sheding of more Blood for the future, was to punish considerable numbers of those who had then actually broken the old Laws of her Kingdom. Her Bishops (and that is the chief and just ground of the charge) had their fears and revenge also, in particular, they were newly restord to their Bishopricks, and Religion, of which they had been dispossessed in the time of King *Edward* the Sixth, they were afraid of being again disturbed; and these fears and passions made them take wrong measures. They perswaded the Queen, that she might as well make Examples of Justice, and prevent future Insurrections, by punishing those for their Religion, who had been Guilty of Treason, as if she had punished them for Treason: and they urged, that by this way she should do her self the greater right, and give a proof to the World, that she was more offended with Treason committed against Heaven, (for so they esteemed *Protestant* Religion) then with Treason committed against her self, which might be interpreted Revenge; they had forgotten the true Principles of the true *Christian* Religion, which required to leave unto God to Revenge whatsoever

ever Injuries are done to him, and to leave it to God to judge what Injuries were done to him, *They did not now think of doing unto others as they would that others ſhould do unto them*; they did not remember the wiſe advice of *Gamaliel*, before mentioned, but giving Ear only to their own Fears, and preferring Human policies before Gospel-Rules, they miſled the Queer, and took away the Lives of vaſt numbers of ſuch againſt whom nothing could be charged, but what was matter of meer Religion, thereby giving a Juſt occaſion to charge upon their own Religion the Principle of Perſecution for meer Religion, which thoſe who now profeſs that Religion, do pretend to diſown and abominate. And as to the buſineſs of the Powder-plot, they pray us to obſerve, that it was the Treaſon, not of the *Papiſts* of *England*, but of a few particular perſons of Diſeperate fortunes and worſe Conſciences, and not without ſuſpition of being drawn into the Snare by their Enemies, that upon the moſt ſevere Scrutiny which could be made into that buſineſs, it clearly appeared, that the number of the offenders was not greater then what happens ſometimes to be engaged in a particular Burglary, and not ſo many as to make up the fourth part of a foot Company of Souldiers, that the Villany of that deſign hath been as fully and generally, yea, and as publickly decryed, condemned and reprobated by the whole party of the *Engliſh Papiſts* of that Age, and of all ſucceeding Ages, as any thing can be by a party in Perſecution who have not ever had any oportunities or allowances to act in any caſe otherwiſe then each perſon of the party as a private perſon, and only in his private capacity: And they appeal to the Juſtice of thoſe who profeſs to have the greateſt Averſion of all others againſt the Religion of the *Papiſts*, whether they will admit it as a rule that the Villanies of ſome private perſons, who profeſs themſelves to be in fellowſhip or communion with any Church or people, calling themſelves Chriſtians, may in Juſtice and ought in reaſon to be charged as proceeding from the Principles, Doctrines, or Religion of that Church or people with which private perſons profeſs to be in communion or fellowſhip? they cry out, God forbid any ſuch rule ſhould have credit in the World.

On the other side, I am not ignorant, that the *Papists* who Esteem the *Protestants* in general as their mortal enemies, by whom they apprehend themselves to have been deprived of what is most dear unto them, from the time that the *Protestant* Religion first gained a preheminency in *England*, are as highly Uncharitable towards the *Protestants*, as these are severe in their censures towards them. They look upon the *Protestants* as the *Israelites* did upon the *Egyptians*, they charged upon them the guilt of all the Blood that hath been shed, of all the Persecutions which have hapned for matters of meer Religion, since the first Act of Parliament of that Nature, made by King *Hen.* 8. unto this hour; insinuating, that what was so cruelly acted by Q. *Maries* Bishops, was occasioned by the Provocations given in the time of King *Edw.* the 6th and warranted (as far as ill Acts can be warranted) first, by the *Non-conformists* retaliations towards the Church of *England*, when subdued by them upon the Death of King *Charles* the first, and then by the present Retaliation made to the *Non-conformists* by those of the Church of *England*, since the Restauration of our present Soveraign. In short, as the *Protestants* in general, to excuse and Justifie themselves, labour to cast Persecution for matters of meer Religion upon the *Papists*, as a principle of Popery; so the *Papists* are as Industrious to perswade the World that it is a principle of Protestancy. I might here by way of Apology and Extenuation refer the *Papists*, as they do the *Protestants*, to consider of Circumstances of times and things which occasioned their Severities against them, as the unruliness which might probably be amongst the people in the time of King *Edw.* the 6th to see their Religion altered as they conceived, by the *Protector*. And in Q. *Elizabeth's* time, besides the resentment which the *Protestants* had of the Cruelties which were exercised against them in Q. *Maries* time, It is certain, the *Papists* did not look upon Q. *Elizabeth* to have any Right to the Crown, she having been declared by the Judicial Sentence, and Judgment of Arch-Bishop *Cranmer* to be Illegitimate; and the Marriage between King *Hen.* 8. and *Anne* of *Bullen* her Mother, being by the same Sentence declared absolutely void *ab Initio*, and that Sentence confirmed by Act of Parliament,

Parliament, 28. *Hen.* 8. C. 7. So that the *Papists* took Q. *Mary* of *Scotland* to be the Rightful Heir to the Crown, and Rightful Queen, and Q. *Elizabeth* was constarined by great necessity to keep them under; but Apologies are not proper to be made on the behalf of those, who have the Authority towards those who are subjected.

And as the *Protestants* in general, and the *Papists*, reproached each other, reciprocally charging upon each other that Persecution for matters of meer Religion was a principle of each others Religion; so did the *Episcopal Protestants*, and the *Non-conformists*: The *Episcopal* party, who first persecuted the *Non-conformists* under the general Name of *Puritans*, or *Presbyterians*, affirmed, that their first beginners in *Scotland*, from whence they derived themselves, did more then any Party upon Earth Persecute others for matters of meer Religion, and had gained a Power by their Usurpation, Oppression and Persecution, being a sort of People who wanted the very essentials (as they said) of Religion, viz. a right Ordination, without which (as they alleadge) there could be no true Church, no true Ministry or true Sacraments: And that, therefore they ought by Penal Laws, timely made, to be prevented from making Disturbances in *England*. The *Puritans* to justifie themselves, denying Persecution for matters of meer Religion to be their Principle, or to be lawful, laboured to fix it upon the Church of *England* as their Principle, and as taken up by them from the *Papists*. And as to the particulars charged upon those of *Scotland*, they said, That whatsoever those of the Reformation had done in *Scotland*, was approved and abetted by Q. *Elizabeth*, and the *Protestants* of *England*, without whose advice nothing in *Scotland* had been Transacted, and without whose assistance things had not been so Effected; they further said as to the point of Ordination, that the Church of *England* ought not in reason, to account *Episcopal* Ordination to be such an essential of Religion as they charged, for that if no Ordination could be valid but by Bishops, that then it would follow, that no Ordination could be valid but from true and rightful Bishops of the true Church of Christ; and then the Ordination of the Church of *England* would be as invalid as

the Ordination of those of *Scotland*; for the Church of *England* could make out no Succession of Bishops, but through the Popish Church, which both parties (as well those of the Church of *England*, as those of *Scotland*) had condemned and agreed to be a false Church, and no true Church of Christ, but an Harlot and *Anti-christian*.

Thus the *Episcopal Protestants* and the *Puritans* charged and recriminated each other, the *Episcopal* party nevertheless making good their ground, so long as they had the Civil Power to support them; but when upon the Death of K. *Charles* the first, the *Non-conformists* gained the civil Power into their Hands, the Church of *England's* party (like all parties oppress) being under Persecution together with the *Papists* for matters of meer Religion, *Did absolutely condemn all such persecutions as unlawful*; and then the *Non-conformists* (who were at that time sub-divided, and brancht out into several other parties) gave occasion to charge them with the Principle of Persecution for meer Religion, and put them to use the same Arguments to clear themselves, as the *Episcopal* Party and *Papists* had respectively before made use of, when the Government was in them, to prevail with the World, to believe that they abhorred the principle of Persecution for meer Religion; and that the Persecutions used by them, were not for any matters of meer Religion, nor in Truth Persecutions, but purely acts of prudence, and doing right to themselves by a just care to keep the *Episcopal* party and the *Papists* out of all possibility of persecuting them any more for the future. But none of them could find any reason of that Nature to excuse the Persecutions, which they used towards the people called *Quakers*, they could not charge them with ever having persecuted any Party or Person: yet in Fact, both the *Non-conformists* and the *Episcopal* party did Persecute them in their turns; and therefore to prevent being charged for persecuting a quiet People for matters of meer Religion: They pretended sometime that the *Quakers* were all Mad-men, and that they Imprisoned them only to keep them out of the way, and to preserve them in peace; and those who had gotten the Government, would upon that very Title claim the right of judging what persons were Mad, as

they

they did alwayes of judging what was Truth and what Error; At other times they pretended to punish the *Quakers* as Blasphemers, and the Persecutors being the only Judges of what was Blasphemy under their Government, they might make what they pleased Blasphemy. When they grew ashamed of this charge, they then pretended that the *Quakers* were concealed *Papists*, and that every one who spoke or uttered any thing in their Meetings (whether Man or Woman) was a Jesuit disguized, it was clear that the *Quakers* suffered highly, and it was as clear there could not with any shew of Truth be any thing charged against them, but what was matter of meer Religion.

Now upon the whole matter, what shall such a person judge of these matters, who esteems himself in danger of being judged by God, if he shall make any rash Judgment? Shall we take for a sufficient solid proof, the charge of an exasperated Enemy against an Enemy who hath provoked him, and this in a matter of so great a concernment, as to render not a single Person but a whole Party unworthy to live? this were to judge against the Rules of common Justice and Righteousness, as well as to Sin against Charity; and this way of judging would render each Party (the *Quakers* only excepted) to be Guilty, and to give a just Title to each Party, where it hath the possession of Power and Government to put to Death all of the other parties: For though we in *England* should refuse to admit the charge of the *Papists* here to be a sufficient proof against the *Protestants* in so great a matter; yet let us not deceive our selves so far, as to suppose that in Popish Countries, the charge of *Papists* against *Protestants* would not be taken to be at the least as valid, as the charge of *Protestants* will be taken to be against *Papists* here. Shall we go another way, and say, that in regard every Party takes it self to be the only good and true *Christians*, and in regard we see every Party, when in Power, practising this thing, and persecuting the other (when in their power) for matters of meer Religion, that therefore every Party agrees in this? *That it is lawful for those who are the true* Christians, *to make and execute penal Laws against such as are erronious* Christians, *and to Inflict pains and penalties upon them for matters of meer Religion, that is, for Errors held by them as Doctrines of Religion*: But neither will this

this be reasonable or convenient, for this will also give Title to those who have the actual Power, and are in the possession of each respective Government in the *Christian* World, to put to death, and destroy all within their respective Juridictions, whom they judge to be Erronious *Christians*: And this will be also to Entitle the civil Magistrate in every *Christian* Country, to the absolute and uncontroleable right of judging between Truth and Error, so as to have no appeal from his definitive Judgment, and to entail against common sence, an Infallibility in the civil Magistrate of every Country of determining in matters of Faith and Religion; *I say against common sence, for* Christianity *teacheth us that there can be but one true Faith; and if this power of judging should be allowed to the civil Magistrate*, there would be as many Faiths as there are Governments amongst *Christians*; that would be true Faith in one Country, and the denyal of it punishable with death; which in another Country would be an Error and a false Faith, and the affirming of it punishable with death, it would also be to justifie not only what the *Papists* in *England*, but what both the *Papists* and *Protestants* in all other parts cast as a charge upon our Nation, that the only Rule of Faith in *England*, is the Parliament of *England*, that nothing is true *Christian* Doctrine in *England*, nor any Translation or Sence, or Interpretation of Scripture, a true Translation or Sence, or Interpretation of Scripture in *England*, but what is judged so to be by the Parliament of *England*, whereas, albeit in the Statute made 2, 3 *Edw.* 6. C. 1. Entituled, *An Act for the uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm*, it was affirmed by the then Parliament, that the then Book of Common-prayer enjoyned by that Statute to be used was *made by the aid of the Holy Ghost*, yet that very Book was by that very Parliament altered and amended as appears by the Statute 5 *Edw.* 6. C. 1. And it hath received several Reformations and Amendments since, and was in and by a Parliament in Q. *Maries* days, judged to be Heretical.

As to my own Judgment in this particular affair, it leads me to another way of reasoning and discoursing, I do, and I think I am bound in Charity to believe that every person and party who professeth Christianity, do at least intend to be what they profess,

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and that they do all in their hearts fully give conſent unto all thoſe common Doctrines of Chriſtianity, which, as ſtanding Principles of that pure Religion, were never queſtioned or denyed by any ſort of Chriſtians, ſuch as are thoſe which I have before obſerved, of *doing unto others, as we would have others do unto us*, and of *not doing evil, that good may come of it*, and thoſe others of *loving our Neighbours as our ſelves, yea, and of loving our very Enemies, and doing good to them who hate us and uſe us diſpightfully*; all which, when ſoberly conſidered, without paſſion or human intereſts are as expreſly againſt all Perſecutions for matters of meer Religion, and do not only tie up *Proteſtants* from deſtroying of *Proteſtants* but alſo even from Perſecuting of any ſort for any matters of meer Religion, as thoſe commands, *Thou ſhalt do no Murther, thou ſhalt not Steal, thou ſhalt not commit Adultery*, are againſt and tye up all Chriſtians from ſhedding of blood Unlawfully, and Malitiouſly, and againſt Rapine and Uncleanneſs. And do alſo in their hearts believe that whatever counſel or work is of man, will fall of it ſelf; and that what is of God will ſtand Maugre all the Perſecutions and oppoſitions of man, and that there is none of them do intend to fight againſt God or would willingly be found ſo doing. All this being taken by me in my own thoughts, to be moſt certainly true, when ever I come to enquire, How then can theſe things be? How can all theſe parties (among which there are great numbers of good, ſober, Judicious and Sincere perſons) offend againſt theſe common Principles of the common faith of all Chriſtians, by making and executing Penal Laws for matters of meer Religion, *Immediately adjoyn* to this another Queſtion, which is, And how can ſo many perſons, profeſſing to be Chriſtians, take revenge by Blood, uſurp the goods of their Neighbours, and commit the Sin of Uncleanneſs; yet all theſe were done by that great and good King, and Prophet, who was *a man after Gods own Heart*. That which to me anſwers this latter Queſtion, ſeems clearly to ſolve the former, that the *Beaſt* gets Dominion over the *Man*, the paſſions commit a force upon reaſon; and Human frailty, being too weak, brings the beſt of men ſometimes (though but for a time) and careleſs men oftentimes to contradict

dict their faith by their practice, until by afflictions they gain understanding, and come to repentance for the saving of their Souls. This to me seems so evident a Truth, that until, something more evident shall convince me of my being mistaken in this, I should think it as great a sin against Charity, for me to charge it as a Principle of the Religion of any party (professing to be Christians) *That Persecution for meer Religion is Lawfull*, because I see it practised by those who have power amongst that party, as to charge the same party, to hold it as a Principle of their Religion, that Murther, Theft and Adultery are Lawful, because great numbers of that party, are two often guilty of the practice of those sins.

If this way of considering things be not found unreasonable, but upon due reflection, shall appear to be conformable to the true Principles of Christianity, and the holy Rules and Doctrines of Christ, I hope those who are Publick persons will forgive me when I wish they would lay it to their hearts, and think well whether it would not be of use to preserve this poor Nation, from the further guilt of those additional Injustices, and Cruelties which the contrary way of rash Judging must involve and daily do involve us in.

Is it not more calm Judgment to say, that the Disordinate passions of K. *Henry* the eighth hurried him into those cruelties which he committed, then to impute them to the Principles of any Religion which he professed? Is it not more becoming us to say that an over-zealous passion of fears which our first Reformers had in the time of K. *Edw.* the sixth made them apprehend that they could not put Popery out of its possession otherwise then by force, and consequently led them unwarily into practices, which were contrary to their *true faith*, then to admit the charge laid on them by the then Persecuted *Papists*, *that Persecution for meer Religion, was the first* Protestant Principle *upon which* Protestancy *laid its first Foundation in* England, were it not more ingenious to attribute the Cruelties, which were inflicted in Queen *Mary*'s time to the passion of Fear in that Queen, and of Fear and Covetousness in her Bishops', that nothing could secure her against New Rebellions from the *Protestants*, nor

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fix the Biſhops in their re-gained Poſſeſſions, but Examples of the utmoſt rigour, Then to labour to fix thoſe Barbarous Cruelties as a Principle upon the Religion of that Queen. Is it not more Charitable to aſſign all the harſh Laws made and executed in the times of Queen *Elizabeth*, King *James*, and in the ſeveral ſucceeding times ſince by the Government avowedly *Proteſtant*, to the Fear, Ambition, Revenge, or other frail Paſſions, covered generally under the ſpecious Titles of *Reaſon of State*, then to give the World a juſt Ground to charge thoſe Cruelties upon a Principle of *Proteſtancy*. This we muſt do, or (which is as much to our Diſhonour) we muſt give a juſt Ground to the moſt civillized Nations of the World, to charge thoſe paſt Barbarities, exerciſed ſo long in *England*, upon the people of our Nation, to the Cruelties of our Engliſh Natures: For what other thing can forraign Nations impute it unto, when they ſhall obſerve the ſame perſecution continued for near one hundred and forty years, under all the various Forms of Religion which we have had, each party renouncing the Cruelties to proceed from any Principle of the Religion owned by that party, yet exerciſing in practice what they profeſs to renounce to be their Faith.

But my Charity doth not reſt here, it compels me to make yet one ſtep further; and ſince it is not to the Diſhonour of our Nation, I hope none will be diſpleaſed with it: As I am verily perſwaded, that all thoſe penal Laws, which have been made in this our Nation for the inflicting of Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion, have not had their Original from any Principle of any of thoſe Religions which have been profeſſed by any of thoſe Powers or Governments by which they were made, but ought to be imputed to the Paſſions of thoſe who made and cauſed them to be put in execution: And that a falſe Reaſon of State gave thoſe Paſſions leave to work even againſt the Religion which every Party perſecuting, profeſſed; ſo do I moſt confidently believe, that the true Principles of the common *Chriſtianity*, which every Party owned, and true Reaſon of State grounded upon thoſe true and commonly owned Principles, reſtrained all and every the reſpective parties by whom thoſe Laws were made, from all intentions of having all or any of thoſe Laws rigidly executed; ſo that thoſe who had from time to time, and who ſtill have the

executive and interpretative Power of those Laws vested in them, have alwayes understood, and do still continue to understand those Laws not to have been intended by the Legislative Power to be *strictly* and *rigidly* or *constantly executed*; my Reason is, that had this been otherwise, All of All parties, except One, who at some time had been in power, must have been ere this totally butchered or destroyed, and our poor Country so far depopulated as to have become a prey to some of our potent Neighbours.

I know some there are who have imputed the remiss execution of these unkind Laws to the generous good nature which is found in the generality of our Nation, which abhors cruelty, and hath alwayes a compassion for those who are under Persecution; and which well appears to any who reflect upon the tenderness of our Courts of Justice, and of the generality both of our Magistrates, and our Juries in all the Countries of *England*, and how they have comported themselves under the several circomstances of past times when they have been called upon and provoked, yea threatned, and endeavoured to have been forced into a Spirit of Persecuting.

Others there are who have taken the great unwillingness in all sorts of persons to be active in the execution of these Laws to proceed from the innate zeal that is in every *English* man to preserve the liberties and properties of their fellow Subjects, as well as their own; and that they have observed, that liberty and property were never any way so much entrencht upon violated and destroyed, as by these cruel Laws of Persecution for meer Religion; so that every man considering when he sees his Neighbour (though differing in Judgment from himself) Persecuted and destroyed for what ought to be called, rather his mistake then his fault (for no man can believe against this Judgment, or take an Oath against his Conscience without sin) that though this be his Neighbours turn this year, it may be his own turn the next year; & no mans Life, Liberty or Property can be secure in case of such Laws executed, but only such men who have a Conscience fitted for all changes of Government, and for every Religion that is uppermost, and who for that reason are as unfit to be trusted by their Neighbours as by the Government.

But though I take it to be very true that this natural inclination

nation to mercy and pity, and this real zeal which all men have for the preſerving of liberty, and property may have been great helps to keep off or mitigate the ſevere Execution of theſe Laws of Perſecution for meer Religion; yet when I well conſider the great Power, and influence which the ſupreme Authority alwayes hath upon the Subjects; and particularly upon all the Magiſtrates in general, who are alwayes perſons nominated and appointed by the Suprem Authority; and muſt be therefore ſuppoſed to be ſuch as in whom the Supreme Authority alwayes confides, as to the due Execution of what the Supreme Authority intends to have Executed; I think it will Naturally follow, that a forbearance of the rigid Execution of theſe Laws, ought to be chiefly imputed to the Religion and true *Chriſtian* policy of the Supream Authority; and we ought to believe, that though a falſe Reaſon of State did ſometimes permit human frailty, to make ſuch Laws as were contradictory to the true Laws and Principles of that very Religion which thoſe perſons profeſſed, by whom thoſe Laws were made; yet true Religion, and true reaſon of ſtate alwayes kept thoſe perſons from intending to have thoſe Laws rigidly and ſeverely Executed: I will confirm this by one ſingle Inſtance of the higheſt Nature, and that not in the beſt of times. The laſt Popiſh Prieſt that was put to death in *England* for being a Prieſt of the *Romiſh* Church, was put to death in the time of *Cromwell*; I ſuppoſe, we are not to doubt of the paſſionate heat which inflamed thoſe who were then in Authority againſt the *Papiſts* and *Popery*; they looked on the *Papiſts* as mortal Enemies to their Government, and as faſt Friends, and devoted Servants to the Crown and Royal Family: Notwithſtanding which, when the ſaid Prieſt came upon his Tryal at the Seſſions-houſe in the *Old Baily* in *London*, and upon his Arraignment, pleaded that he was not Guilty of Treaſon, but acknowledged himſelf to be a Prieſt of the *Roman* Church; It clearly appeared that thoſe who were his Judges, did their utmoſt to preſerve his Life, and to prevent the Execution againſt him of thoſe Laws upon which he ſtood Indicted: For they did for many hours ſuſpend the recording of his Confeſſion, making it their endeavour to prevail with him to plead *not Guilty* to the

Indictment; they preſſed him to this in the publick Court, aſſuring him, that if he would ſo plead, his Life ſhould be ſafe; and that they had no evidence which could prove him to be a Prieſt. And when the Old Man (Aged about ſeventy two Years) would not be drawn to deny himſelf to be a Prieſt; (taking it to be a dying of his Religion) ſo that the Court was compelled to give Judgment againſt him; The Magiſtrate who gave the Sentence, was ſo drowned in Tears upon that ſad occaſion, that it was long before he could pronounce the Sentance, which the Law compelled him (as he profeſſed) to give. Now I ask, can it be preſumed that in thoſe ſevere times againſt *Popery*, thoſe who then ſate upon the Seat of Juſtice, would, or durſt have proceeded thus in a publick Court, and made it their buſineſs ſo openly, ſo avowedly to have ſaved the Life of a Prieſt of that party, if they had not well conſidered that the makers of thoſe Laws, and even *Cromwell*, who had then taken upon him the Government of theſe Nations, did not in Truth intend a rigid and ſevere Execution of thoſe Laws, which were for Inflicting Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion?

But I think, I need give no further Inſtances for the proof of this my Opinion: whoſoever ſhall reflect upon the preſent genius of our whole Nation, and conſider in what deteſtation all men have the Execution of perſecuting Laws for matters of meer Religion; How publickly Informers are abhorred and diſcountenanced, when they labour to perſecute any upon any ſuch Law, will eaſily ſee that the whole Nation in general is Convinced, that thoſe Laws were never any of them made, with intention to have them rigidly Executed. I have been told, (and it ſeems to be grounded upon Reaſon) that it is a principle of our Laws, *That even an Act of Parliament, which is againſt the Law of God, or againſt Reaſon, is void in it ſelf*; if this be true (as me thinks it ought to be) I think we are very near the time, wherein all our preſent Laws of this Nature, by which any are ſubject to be in any meaſure perſecuted for matters of meer Religion, will be repealed by the general Voice of the whole Nation, and that when the particular Perſons, of which the great Body of this Nation is compoſed, ſhall have conſidered ſomethiug more deliberately

deliberately then their Paſſions have yet permitted all to do, that every Law of this nature is againſt the Liberty and Property of the Subjects of *England*; unjuſt and cruel, in puniſhing men for not proceeding againſt their Conſciences; expreſly againſt the very Principles and Rules of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the principles of that true Religion which every one of us pretends to own; deſtructive to the Trade and well being of our Nation, by oppreſſing and driving away the moſt induſtrous Working Hands of our Nation, and depopulating, and thereby impoveriſh our Country, which is capable of imploying ten times the number of people which we now have; contradictory to the Rule of Juſtice, grounded upon common Reaſon, as well as Religion, which requires, *That no man ſhould do unto another, what he would not have done unto himſelf*, and conſequently void in it ſelf by the Rule of the Laws of our own Country: There will not be found a Magiſtrate, nay, a common Subject in *England*, who will not as poſitively renounce the putting in execution, or being acceſſary to the executing of any Law of this Nature, as he will renounce the becoming guilty of thoſe deteſtable Sins of Murder or Theft. But until men are a little further convinced of theſe Truths, you (Sr.) ought not to be angry with, but rather pity thoſe Magiſtrates from whoſe Hands you have lately ſuffered for a Matter meerly of Religion: Peradventure they did not fully conſider, that the Matter with which you were charged, was a Matter of meer Religion, but took the Meeting in an Aſſembly meerly for the Worſhip of God, *to be an Unlawful Aſſembly*, becauſe prohibited by a preſent Law, as the poor Magiſtrates in the Apoſtles times took their Meetings in their Aſſemblies meerly for the Worſhip of God, to be Unlawful Aſſemblies, & Breaches of the Peace, becauſe they were prohibited by their Laws: Or perhaps their Fear that they ſhould themſelves be ſubject to a Forfeiture, in caſe they ſhould have denyed their Warrant to the Informer, made them fall under that Human Frailty for the ſecuring of themſelves. However it was, I ſuppoſe you have no juſt Ground to believe the thing to be any Effect of Malice againſt you or your Friends; and if it be not, then the ſame Magiſtrates, now their Fear is over,

may

may yet be instrumental to do you and themselves Right. It is Odds but upon a strict Reflection upon what the Informer hath sworn, the Devil may have prevailed with him to swear something which may be proved untrue; for Informers are not squeemish in swearing for their own profit, as it daily appears in *Westminster-Hall* and *London*, and one point of Perjury proved will invalidate all his Testimony, and reverse all that is done: At which I am very confident no man (besides the Informer) will be displeased. And this is in plain Truth the great Reason why your Friends here desire to know all the Circumstances of your Case; the certifying of which may be an Advantage to your self and your Friends there, and will be particularly very Welcome unto

Sr.

Your Old True Friend,

A. N.

Poscript.

Poſtſcript

I Have here omitted many of thoſe great Arguments, both which others have uſed, and which may yet be advanced from the Nature of this Subject, partly becauſe there are ſo many *Diſcourſes* extant, and partly becauſe Engliſh Mankind begins to be ſatisfied in the Matter. Yet this give me leave to add in general, That Force upon Conſcience, and corporal Penalties about Matters of Religion, have not only no Preſident or Example from Chriſt or his Apoſtles, but are expreſly *againſt* both their *Precepts* and *Examples*. This Coertion is the old Diſturber of States, the Deſtroyer of Property, the Depopulator of Kingdoms, the Enemy of Human Nature, of Kind Neighbourhood, and of Conſcientious Religion. At beſt it either maketh men *Religious by Rote*, which is *no Religion*; or *conformable for Fear and Intereſt*, which is *Ir-religion* and baſe Hypocriſie. But beſides all this, it corrupteth and diſtracteth the Nature of all *Civil Government*, by making the meaſure of Loyalty, not *Love*, *Honour* and *Obedience* to *Caſar*, but *Conformity* to the Clergy and Religion in Faſhion; which deſtroyes the true Dependence and Obligation in Government; and ſubjects the Lives, Liberties and Eſtates of the People to the frequent Revolutions of Religion; which ought to ſtand fixed and ſacred upon the common and undeniable Principles of Civil and Juſt Government. I hope I ſhall be excuſed for *this Conception*, ſince of all others, *this renders to* Cæſar *the things that are* Cæſars: and I would to God, all the *Caſars* of the World ſaw the Truth of this *Notion*: They would not then ſuffer themſelves to be *grown upon*, not only by another Power then *Caſars*, but by a Power *contrary* to *Caſars*, and which in the tendency of it leaves *Caſar* nothing but *his Name*. We might hope, he would not be leſs kind to his People, then *Hens* are to their *Chickens*; not expoſe them to the *Tempeſt*, nor the cruel *Tallons* of the Birds of Prey; but cover, defend and comfort them under his

his Wing of Juſt Power and Favour, endeavour their Encreaſe, encourage their Induſtry, and thereby enrich and repleniſh the Kingdom, not impoveriſh and depopulate them; For *the Glory of a Prince is in the Multitude of his people*, not Beggars, but *men of Induſtry*: But who dare be induſtrous now adayes, that would not have his Labours made the *Forfeit* of his *ſober Conſcience*? UNHAPPY AGE! *Come*, 'tis time for Humane Nature to remember from whence ſhe came, for Man and *to love*, for *Cæſar to be kind to all his people*, to let his Rain fall upon all, his Sun-ſhine upon all, that he may juſtly render himſelf Maſter of the *Affections* of all; and not intereſt nor imbroyle his Government with the opinionary Differences of Religion, which doth not enlarge, but *narrow* his Empire: and thoſe that put him upon ſuch meaſures, they do *Ill Offices* in the great Family of the Kingdom: They ſet the Father *againſt the Son*, and excite him to diſinherit his Children, and thoſe *virtuous too*, meerly for the ſober exerciſe of a diſſenting Conſcience, about Matters relating to t'other World. This is *practiſing Reprobation for Opinion, and ſacrificing Nature and Morality to Modes of Religion*: nay, this is to *engroſs* Cæſar *by a Party, and to monopolize him from the reſt of his people*; a Sin againſt the very Nature and end of Government. God grant us all more Wiſdom, more Honeſty and more Charity, and that we may yet live to ſee *all induſtry encouraged, the Poor employed, the Kingdom in love with its own Growths, Virtue only rewarded, Vice only puniſht, that* Righteouſneſs, Peace *and* Plenty *may yet vouchſafe to dwell amongſt us. So be it to* Cæſar *and his people, while the Sun and Moon endures.*

THE END.